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Your personal support and enthusiasm will help guarantee another successful campaign this year.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The President's Radio Address *September 10, 1994*

Good morning. Let me begin by saying that Hillary and I send our deepest sympathies and our prayers to the friends and loved ones of the 132 people killed in the air crash near Pittsburgh on Thursday. I know all Americans will send their thoughts and prayers to the grieving this weekend. Meanwhile, we're working to get to the bottom of what happened in the crash, and we're working to continue to assure the safety of American passengers.

All across our country this week, Americans came back from vacation. Our children are back in school, and for many families this is what they regard as the real new year. As we get back to the business of our lives, it's a good time to stop and think about the work we have ahead of us as a nation.

Unfortunately, that work includes a stark fact about our children. Too many of them are growing up in fear. All too many are growing up without the values of mainstream society, without knowing the difference between what's right and wrong, and without believing that it makes a difference whether they do right or wrong.

By now, nearly all of us know the story of Robert Sandifer, known as Yummy to his friends. He was first arrested when he was 8 years old. A couple of weeks ago, when he was only 11, he became a suspect in the gang shooting of an innocent girl named Shavon Dean. Several days later, that boy died himself in what Chicago police say was yet another gang-related killing.

The number of gang homicides has nearly tripled since 1980 in Robert and Shavon's hometown. And all across America, too many decent people have felt the anguish of losing a child to the meanness of the streets. At younger and younger ages, boys and girls are turning to gangs and to guns.

For a child without an involved family, a gang offers a feeling of belonging. For a young person without options for tomorrow, a gang offers a sense of purpose. For anyone born in a home barred and chained off from danger, life on the streets seems like a taste of freedom they've never known.

But America knows how to use its freedom better than that. We see it every day in big cities and small towns as Americans do come together to take up their responsibilities and to put the spirit of community to work. And I believe we have many opportunities right now to do just that and to turn around the scourge of violence in the lives of our children.

Much of that work begins with what each of us can do as caring Americans. Today I'll sign a proclamation designating next week as National Gang Violence Prevention Week. I'm asking Americans to address this profound problem, each of them in their hometowns, to save a generation of our children. Every parent, every teacher, every person who has the chance to influence children must force a change in the lives of our kids. We have to show them we love them, and we have to teach them discipline and responsibility. Robert Sandifer's grandmother despaired at his funeral because, she said, "I couldn't reach you." We must keep doing everything we can to reach those children. And we must help them respect the law and keep them safe.

Next week I'll sign into law the historic crime bill that will be a tough but smart tool in every community's fight for our children's safety. It'll punish hardened young criminals with stronger penalties, and it will expand boot camps, drug courts, and other sanctions to stop first-time offenders from beginning lives of crime. It bans 19 assault weapons and goes a long way toward

keeping the guns out of the hands of our children. And with prevention programs, the crime law will take on the sickness of gangs and drugs and give our young people a chance at a new and better life.

Finally, we have to show our children before they enter gangs that they already belong to a community larger than themselves, in which they can feel important and serve a larger purpose. On Monday, here at the White House and at sites all across America, we'll kick off AmeriCorps, our national service effort.

AmeriCorps is America at its best, people rolling up their sleeves and assuming responsibility to make our country better. At a time when so many of our people feel alienated or alone, the 20,000 new members of AmeriCorps will work closely with neighbors and fellow citizens all across this country to make our communities places where children can grow up to realize their God-given potential. They'll help make schools safe in Los Angeles, tutor second graders from Kentucky, repair neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Instead of just talking about problems, they'll be solving them. AmeriCorps will call

upon the best of a generation to reclaim what has always been best about America.

All these things will help us make this time a year and a season of renewal. It's a time in which I'll keep working to bring greater prosperity to our hard-working people. We already have over 4 million new jobs in this economy, but we've got a good ways to go. It's a time, with our new crime law, when we will send not just a legal but a moral message across America, that Americans have a right to be secure in their homes, on their streets, in their schools and places of work. And it's a time, with AmeriCorps, when we will renew the ethic of service that has always been a key to our greatness, offering first 20,000 and, in 2 years, 100,000 of our young people a chance to earn some credit against a college education in return for serving their country at the grassroots level.

In all these ways, we'll be helping to fulfill our obligations to our children, to our Nation, and to our future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks to AmeriCorps Volunteers in Aberdeen, Maryland September 11, 1994

Thank you very much. Chaplain, and General and Mrs. Tragemann, General Monroe, General Scott, Colonel Bosley, Senator and Mrs. Sarbanes, ladies and gentlemen.

I guess I'll start by saying happy birthday—[laughter]—and happy anniversary. A commitment of 43 years is something the rest of this country could do more to emulate, sir. And we thank both of you for what you've done.

Hillary and I are delighted to be here today with all of you and especially with our young AmeriCorps volunteers. [Applause] A quiet, reticent group. [Laughter]

This is a special service that reaffirms our relationship to our God and our God-given responsibility to serve our fellow human beings. The Scripture from Isaiah that is the basis of this service today is something we would all do well to read and live by on a regular basis and to echo the words of Isaiah, "Here am

I, Lord; send me." Because as all of you who are here know already, service to others is something everyone can do and something everyone should do because of our relationship to our God, our responsibility to others, and our responsibility to ourselves.

This chapel is filled with people who have answered the call to service. In every case, you embody what service means to America, Americans coming together and moving forward. In three words that I have always believed embodied what was best about this country—opportunity, responsibility, and community—your country has given you the opportunity to serve. You have assumed the responsibility. And our American family is much stronger and better and richer as a result.

Many of you are civilians who have spent a lifetime fulfilling the public trust in and around Aberdeen and supporting our Nation's